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ABSTRACT

This report examines fallacious assumptions existing in graduate study and in the field of higher education. These assumptions are that: (1) graduate students are excessively supervised; (2) examinations are the best criterion for student selection and for judging professional promise; (3) evaluation is equivalent to education; (4) students learn what is presented to them; (5) truths of education are given; (6) method is more important than substance; (7) students become creative professionals after being passive learners; and (8) graduate students should be regarded as manipulatable objects instead of as persons. Other specific problems are the newness of the field of higher education, its lack of visibility and "respectability," the lack of adequate research opportunity and support for graduate students, and an attempt by a few to maintain the status quo. Graduate students must organize, demand and initiate changes in the curriculum, the hiring and promotion of faculty, the salaries and benefits of graduate students, the availability of research facilities, entrance requirements, their program, and other pertinent areas. (AF)

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Group 47
Tuesday morning and afternoon, March 3

TROUBLED STUDENTS: IN DEPARTMENTS IN FIELDS AND IN PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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In 1963 Dr. Carl Rogers wrote a paper entitled, "Graduate Education in Psychology: A Passionate Statement". Many of you may possess a copy of this work, although it was not published until 1969, as a chapter in his book, Freedom to Learn, it was widely circulated to members of a variety of disciplines. Dr. Rogers' original article was rejected for publication because it was thought that it was too controversial and that it might have a divisive effect upon the science and profession of psychology!

Dr. Rogers lists a number of fallacious assumptions that he sees existing in graduate education in psychology and which certainly exist in other fields including our own of higher education. It seems appropriate that we as graduate students examine these assumptions in an attempt to better understand what we are about and what we may do to rectify some of the problems we recognize in our educational endeavors.

Some of these assumptions are:

(1) That graduate students may not be trusted to pursue their own scientific and professional learning.

I ask you to think for a moment of the number of "required" courses that are a part of your program. Is it necessary, as graduate students, most of whom have had professional experience, to be supervised and steered through a program. Is there an opportunity to pursue those areas that we wish to pursue as graduate students, indeed is there any time left in our programs to do this? Do graduate students have an opportunity to participate in the planning of curriculums of higher education? Do we have an opportunity to express our feelings and concerns about the future of our field to those who will ultimately make curriculum and program decisions?

(2) That the ability to pass examinations is the best criterion for student selection and for judging professional promise.

How many departments of Higher Education are interested only in our GRE scores and our Millers Analagies scores! If we have passed examinations well in the past, the assumption is we will be good professionals. How many departments of Higher Education are really interested in our past experiences, our plans for the future, our ideas on Higher Education? How many departments select on the basis of creative promise or personal philosophy? Indeed, how many of us were ever asked

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why we chose Higher Education and what we intended to do about the myriad of problems that will arise in our field in the future?

There are even more devastating assumptions that I will only list here, since this paper is to aid you in raising questions for discussion. Graduate departments have assumed that: 3) evaluation is equivalent to education, 4) that students learn what is presented to them, 5) that truths of education are given 6) that method is more important than substance, 7) that we become creative professionals after being passive learners 8) and finally, that as graduate students we should be regarded as manipulatable objects and not as persons.

It seems to me if we examine the above implicit assumptions that apply to graduate education we may find the roots and sources of our trouble. We are indeed troubled students in departments, in our field and even in associations of Higher Education because of many specific decisions based on the above assumptions which are made about our lives and our particular positions. However, there are equally important situations that cause us to be troubled.

Let us first look at our departments. In general, Departments of Higher Education are a relatively new phenomena and with a few notable exceptions suffer from a lack of visibility, both on their own campuses and in the academic-world-at-large. This lack of visibility and academic "respectability" has caused a paranoia not only among professors of higher education, but among graduate students for this mental state has been infectuous. It may well be that many students in programs of Higher Education are less than proud of their departments and their field. The far reaching implications of this type of attitude are too numerous to discuss here, but one has only to use his imagination or indeed look at his own personal experience as a graduate student.

There are additional departmental problems. There is the problem of the department's relationship to the college, and the university. There is the problem of the departments' relationship to other departments and colleges. All of these relationships deeply affect the ability to attract faculty, the research opportunities available and the total funds available with which to work--these in turn effect the education we receive.

There are further problems, although mundane, very troublesome to graduate students. Most departments of Higher Education as far as I can discern do not provide adequate research opportunities and monies for graduate students; do not provide anywhere near adequate graduate stipends or traveling allowances; do not provide adequate office space or access to telephone and equipment. The list goes on ad-infinitum--unfortunately we are all too familiar with these conditions.

As for the field of Higher Education I see one major issue that is overriding and results in a number of sub-issues. There seems to be a tendency on the part of the "elder statesmen" and recognized leaders in our field to perpetuate the belief that the Higher Education practitioner's main duty is to perpetuate the status quo. This posture may not in reality exist, but it is perceived to exist by most of the graduate students I know. This has a deadening effect on students in programs of Higher Education. There is not in our field at the present time the sense of excitement and wonder that should be there. From whom do we receive encouragement to produce new ideas and concepts? Who encourages us to broaden our bases of understanding with eyes to the future? I am reminded now of two incidents which have happened to me in my graduate experience. One day I was talking with a fellow Higher Education major and in the course of conversation happened to mention that I was taking my minor in philosophy. His reply to me was "Whatever in the world has that to do with Higher Education?" The second incident involved a

conversation with a faculty member. I was expressing my deep concern about the destruction of our environment and the problem of over-population. I felt that these problems were paramount and certainly deserved our attention as students in Higher Education. I was informed that these issues were: "...outside the realm of Higher Education." I wonder a lot!

As for Associations of Higher Education we are treated, as in our departments and in our field, as second class citizens, we are to be tolerated and even the beneficiaries of benevolent-tokenism, but we are not to be taken seriously or reckoned with unless absolutely necessary. We are told that this is the way it has always been and therefore---!

In most associations we do not hold positions on national or state Board of Directors and our voice is only heard through informal channels. Many organizations do not allow graduate studnets to assist in planning convention programs and thus many of us are disappointed in offerings but have no recourse for action. Although many organizations are allowing time of their national programs for graduate students, these programs are usually offered at the same time the "regular" convention schedule is being followed.

I certainly have not covered all the troubles besetting the graduate student today, but I hope that I have at least mentioned the most important. It is now time to say what I think can be done to alleviate some of these conditions. I am an optimist and thus believe firmly that something can be done. However, although we may expect help from our departments, from leaders in our field and from associations of Higher Education, I am firmly convinced that change will only come if we initiate the changes. This assumes of course, a real committment on our part. It assumes a willingness to take a stand no matter how unpopular. It assumes that we are willing to take personal and joint risks. We will have to ripple the water! These are just the things that most graduate students are reluctant to do. There are many good reasons for this reluctance, and you all know them as well as I. However, the only alternative to commitment to change is the plight we now endure. What can be done?

In our departments we might: 1) Institute a strong organization of students of Higher Education 2) An organization concerned with curriculum change and innovation, the salaries and benefits of graduate students; the hiring and promotion of faculty; the availability of research facilities; the entrance requirements and program demands 3) Plan seminars of our own which we feel important and find someone to help us conduct such seminars 4) To request a voting voice on the faculties of Higher Education and 5) Finally, not to accept individually or collectively what we know to be sham or the perpetration of the doctrine that, "This is what I had to do for my doctorate therefore this is what you will do!"

In our field we must become more visible and vocal. We must individually and collectively make our feelings and ideas known to the recognized leaders. We must let others know that we are deeply troubled, why we are and what we would like to see done. We should endeavor to publish. Could not every "termpaper" be viewed and written as a potential publishable article?

Someone of us or a committee of us should survey the students of Higher Education throughout the nation so that we might have some data on our programs and how we feel about our programs. As far as I could discover there is no such information available now.

We must above all consider ourselves and conduct ourselves as professionals if we expect to be received as professionals. We must get over the idea that one magic day when we place "Dr." before our name all will come to us.

In Associations of Higher Education we must demand voting representatives on national boards. We must insist that we have the opportunity to be members of planning committees. We must insist that we have a place on the "regular" convention program. We must ask for all the rights and privileges of full membership.

What all of this boils down to is that we must begin to assume responsibility for our present state in life. We must not, as all minorities have learned, wait for changes to be initiated from above or without. They will only occur from within. A very long time ago someone told me that the definition of security was the freedom to be and feel insecure! Perhaps we as graduate students should ponder this for awhile.

Arrowsmith, W., "The Shame of the Graduate Schools," Harpers Magazine, March, 1966, 232 (1390), 51-59.

Rogers, Carl, Freedom To Learn, Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Company, 1969.